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FORMER MCNEESE CREDIT UNION EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLEMENT

Must pay \$783,985.97 in restitution

Lake Charles, Louisiana . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that **CRISTELLA R. BELAIRE a/k/a CRIS BELLAIRE**, age 41, from Lake Charles, Louisiana, was sentenced yesterday to 51 months imprisonment to be followed by 5 years supervised release by United States District Judge Patricia Minaldi for theft, embezzlement or misapplication of funds by a credit union officer or employee. BELAIRE was also ordered to pay \$783,985.97 in restitution, along with 200 hours of community service upon completion of her term of imprisonment. In addition, during the period of incarceration and supervised release after incarceration, the defendant is not to open any new personal lines of credit without first obtaining permission of the Court.

BELAIRE pled guilty to a Bill of Information in October 2006 following an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the McNeese University Police Department.

From January 1997 through September 2005, BELAIRE was an employee of the McNeese Federal

Credit Union. During this time, she also stole funds from McNeese Federal Credit Union member savings accounts. The defendant targeted 16 accounts which were rarely accessed or used by the owners of the accounts, but maintained high account balances. BELAIRE prepared false quarterly savings account statements which she mailed to McNeese Federal Credit Union customers from whom she stole. BELAIRE also falsified and mailed IRS Form 1099s to the account holders.

BELAIRE was not authorized to take the funds which were placed in McNeese Federal Credit Union accounts nor did she use the funds for any legitimate credit union business. She used the funds for her personal use.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley.

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